It took hours to search Amtrak train's wreckage; here's why > A6

Read the latest on the derailment: seattletimes.com

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Rail officials pushed 'aggressive' timeline

NEW AMTRAK ROUTE WHERE TRAIN DERAILED

Monday's tragedy came just months before critical safety technology is scheduled to launch

By MIKE BAKER, CHRISTINE WILLMSEN AND MIKE LINDBLOM / *Seattle Times staff reporters*

TIMESWATCHDOG

The corridor where an Amtrak train derailed Monday was years in the making. But in recent months, officials were confronting a mix of deadlines.

State transportation leaders had long ago envisioned the corridor would be refurbished by 2019, according to state records, but to fully collect federal stimulus money, construction had to be completed by mid-2017. The state then vowed to open the line this fall.

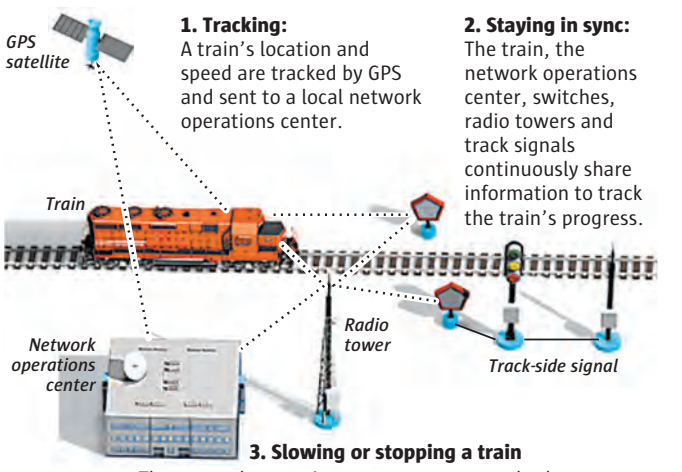
Officials kept that promise, launching the new Point Defiance Bypass route on Monday. But had they waited just a few more months, the service would have included a critical safety feature that automatically slows trains if they exceed speed limits.

Investigators are still determining why the train went into a curve at 80 mph in a 30 mph zone before jumping the tracks, killing at least three people and injuring dozens more. But the accident raises questions about the decision to start the new passenger line before the safety technology, known as positive train control, was scheduled to be fully operational next spring.

See > CONTROLS, A8

Positive train control system

The system known as positive train control is designed to prevent accidents by slowing or stopping trains automatically when a collision or derailment is imminent. How it works:



1. Tracking: A train's location and speed are tracked by GPS and sent to a local network operations center.

2. Staying in sync: The train, the network operations center, switches, radio towers and track signals continuously share information to track the train's progress.

3. Slowing or stopping a train The network operations center can remotely slow or stop a train if it is going too fast or approaching a stop signal or misaligned switch and the engineer fails to act.

Sources: Federal Railroad Administration, Congressional Research Service, Meteorcomm LLC

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

STEVE RINGMAN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

The underside of an Amtrak passenger car is visible as it is rolled over Tuesday. The car was eventually loaded onto a truck to be taken to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, where it and other train components will be analyzed, officials said.

Feds: No one hit emergency brake on train

By CHRISTINE CLARRIDGE AND JESSICA LEE
Seattle Times staff reporters

An engineer never applied the emergency brakes before the Amtrak passenger train traveling 50 mph faster than the posted speed limit derailed Monday, killing three passengers and injuring dozens more.

Federal transportation officials said Tuesday preliminary information from the data-event recorder in the train's lead locomotive showed an emergency brake was automatically activated only after the train left the tracks.

Officials with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) plan to soon interview the train's engineer and crew members, who were all hospitalized, to help determine why it hit a curve in the tracks at 80 mph, derailing and spilling onto Interstate 5 near Olympia.

See > WRECK, A7

Close friends who loved trains among those who died

By MIKE LINDBLOM AND DAVID GUTMAN
Seattle Times transportation reporters

Two of the men killed in Monday's Amtrak train derailment near Olympia were longtime rail advocates, who worked in transportation, spent their free time pushing for better train service and traveled the country and the world to ride on new train lines.

Zack Willhoite, 35, and Jim Hamre, 61, close friends, were riding on the inaugural trip of Amtrak's new Seattle-to-Portland service along a rebuilt inland track when it derailed Monday morning. They'd also ridden last week on what was to be the last service on the old coastal route.

After Monday's crash, Amtrak temporarily rerouted its service back to the coastal route.

Both men focused their lives, to a large extent, on public transportation. Hamre traveled the world — Austria, Switzerland and Australia, among other places — to ride

See > FRIENDS, A7

GOP nears victory as Congress votes on tax bill

REPUBLICANS CLOSE IN ON BIG WIN FOR TRUMP — BUT THERE'S A GLITCH

$1.5 trillion bill a sweeping rewrite of tax code

By CAROLYN LOCHHEAD
San Francisco Chronicle

WASHINGTON — The Senate passed a $1.5 trillion tax bill Tuesday night, hours after House Republicans suffered an embarrassing glitch that will delay by one day their first major legislative victory in the Trump era.

The House, which passed the massive tax measure earlier Tuesday, will have to have a do-over Wednesday because of a procedural glitch discovered hours before the Senate vote.

HOW OUR STATE DELEGATION voted on tax bill > B1

The new vote is not expected to change the outcome in the House, and with the Senate approving the bill Tuesday night, Republicans appear well on their way to achieving their long-sought goal to slash corporate taxes and rewrite the corporate tax code.

To help offset the cost to the federal budget, the bill would repeal or scale back some deductions used by the middle-class that are especially valuable to Californians and residents of other high-tax states.

But the setback in the House did highlight the haste with which Re-

See > TAX, A4

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